Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Oregon College and University Campus Communities on the 2019 novel coronavirus and COVID-19

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Note: this FAQ document is intended to focus on topics specific to Oregon higher education institutions, and is meant to supplement the guidance that the Oregon Health Authority provides to Oregonians on the novel coronavirus and COVID-19, the illness caused by this virus. Please go to the sites below for the most updated facts and information in multiple languages on health and prevention guidance.

What is COVID-19?
COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus, and public health officials are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy.

Where can I find reliable up-to-date information on the 2019 novel coronavirus and COVID-19?
Go to the Oregon Health Authority or Centers for Disease Control and Prevention website for public information on the novel coronavirus and COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the information here is updated regularly:
- Oregon Health Authority
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Communicating on College Campuses
Sharing information with students, staff, faculty, and families…
Higher education institutions and partners are encouraged to share reliable informational resources to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 among students, faculty, and staff. Consider sharing the following resources.

The Oregon Health Authority COVID-19 Updates website: The OHA has the most updated public information on the virus in Oregon, available in multiple languages. This includes Frequently Asked Questions, current updates on the situation in Oregon, guidelines on prevention and travel,
information for health providers, local public health authorities, families, schools, tribes and more. Here are just some of the OHA resources: You can find these links below by visiting the OHA COVID-19 website.

- COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions (English)
- COVID-19 Factsheet (Available in multiple languages)
- COVID-19 Prevention Flyer (English)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Coronavirus Disease 2019 website, including: General CDC communications resources including videos, fact sheets, and posters. General CDC fact sheets help students, staff, faculty, and their families understand COVID-19 and the steps they can take to protect themselves:

- What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- How to prevent the spread of COVID-19 if you are sick
- Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19
- Share facts about COVID-19 to help prevent stigma

Reinforce anti-bias

Some individuals are experiencing stigma and discrimination in the United States related to COVID-19. This includes people of Chinese and Asian descent, as well as some returning travelers and emergency responders who may have been exposed to the virus. All should reinforce the principles of respect and anti-bias. Do not make assumptions of risk based on race, ethnicity or country of origin. It is important to remember that the virus doesn’t discriminate. There are no specific cultural groups or people of a particular heritage that are more or less likely to get COVID-19 following exposure or spread it to others. The CDC has information higher education institutions can share to reduce COVID-19-associated fear and stigma. Other resources:

- COVID-19: Learn the Facts. Viruses Don't Discriminate

Maintain confidentiality

Maintain confidentiality of people with confirmed coronavirus infection. Do not share information about cases that has not already been shared by your local public health authority. Your local public health department and institution will communicate critical information about an outbreak in a college setting, but student confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with federal privacy laws, including the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Keep rumors and misinformation from spreading

Sharing accurate information during a time of heightened concern is critical to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading. You can help by pointing people to reliable sources only such as the OHA or CDC.
Cancellations and Best Practices for Classes/Campus Events

How are decisions made about suspending or cancelling classes, events, and activities on college and university campuses?

The decisions are made by colleges or universities in accordance with guidelines by public health officials, to protect the public health of students, faculty, staff, and all who participate in the campus community. The Oregon Health Authority (OHA), working through the local public health office and in collaboration with the U.S. CDC, provides information and guidance to institutions. Oregon higher education institutions are advised to follow the CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19).

The CDC advises that in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19, the first step for colleges and universities is to consult with local health officials. Determine with local health officials if, when, and for how long the college or university may need to suspend classes and postpone or cancel extracurricular or large events and activities (i.e. on-campus sporting, conferences, theater, or music events).

College and university administrators should work in close collaboration with local health officials to make decisions about suspending classes or canceling events and activities. Colleges and universities are not expected to make decisions about suspending classes or canceling events on their own. They can seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine whether, when, and for how long to take these steps. The recommendation on class suspension and cancellation may change in terms of geographic scope or duration as the location outbreak situation evolves.

What are the best practices for preventing spread of the virus at large events (such as conferences or athletic events)?

These are best practices colleges and universities may consider to prevent spreading the virus at large events (such as conferences, athletic events, or other large gatherings):

- Emphasize that participants, staff and spectators should stay away from the event if they feel unwell (have fever and cough).
- Provide easily accessible soap and water or alcohol hand-sanitizers and tissues in all venue common areas and consider having additional hand-sanitizer stations available to promote proper hand hygiene.
- Promote appropriate respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene practices prior to, and during, the event through signage and announcements. Visit the CDC’s Coughing and Sneezing Etiquette and Clean Hands Webpage for more information.
- Prioritize that all frequently touched surfaces throughout the venue are properly cleaned prior to the event with approved disinfectants and that adequate cleaning supplies are available for use during the event.
- Encourage spectators to spread out in the venue, when possible.
- Engage in “touchless” greetings instead of high-fiving or shaking hands.
Travel and Study Abroad

**Should staff or students delay or suspend travel to affected areas?**
For guidance for students, staff, or faculty who plan to travel, or have recently traveled, to areas with high risk of COVID-19, refer to the CDC’s [FAQ for travelers](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html) and the CDC [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/covid-19/index.html) website. Travel recommendations differ by country.

**Should colleges postpone or cancel foreign student exchange programs?**
On March 1, 2020, the CDC issued specific guidance to higher education institutions to *consider* postponing or cancelling student foreign student exchange programs. Read the Guidance for Student Foreign Travel for Institutions of Higher Education [here](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).

The CDC recommends that institutions *consider* asking current program participants to return to their home country. Those overseeing student foreign exchange programs should be aware that students may face unpredictable circumstances, travel restrictions, challenges in returning home or accessing health care while abroad.

The CDC further recommends that institutions *consider* asking students participating in study abroad programs to return to the United States. Institutions should work with state and local public health officials to determine the best approach for when and how (e.g., chartered transportation for countries or areas assessed as high-risk for exposure) their study abroad students might return. All plans for returning study abroad students should be designed to protect participants from stigma and discrimination.

Given the speed of spread and the number of countries experiencing human-to-human transmission, higher education institutions should evaluate the risks associated with choosing to maintain programs abroad and take the appropriate proactive measures. Higher education institutions that continue to maintain programs abroad should monitor [cdc.gov/COVID-19](https://www.cdc.gov/COVID-19) for additional information.

**What guidance is available for staff or students returning from affected areas?**
A list of countries and their risk assessment level for COVID-19 can be found on the CDC webpage: [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel/covid-19/index.html). Guidance differs by country risk assessment level.

This website has relevant information for students, staff, and faculty who have recently traveled back to the United States. The CDC guidance for [high-risk countries with widespread sustained (ongoing) transmission can be found here](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).
Cleaning and Disinfecting

**What kind of routine environmental cleaning is recommended to prevent spread of COVID-19?**

The CDC recommends the following routine cleaning:

- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students, staff, and faculty before each use.

**How are facilities with students/staff identified with COVID-19 decontaminated?**

If students and staff at a college or university develop the COVID-19 infection, cleaning with standard disinfectants is effective in killing the virus. A plan for cleaning campus facilities can be developed by the institution in consultation with local public health. Here is a list of disinfectants that can be used to kill the COVID-19 virus and CDC’s Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations.

**What else should Colleges and Universities do to Plan?**

**What should colleges and universities do now to prepare for COVID-19 impacts?**

See the CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for more detailed information on the steps below.

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for colleges and universities to do now is plan and prepare, to help stop or slow the spread of respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19. The CDC recommends that institutions:

- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans, in collaboration with local health departments, institution systems, and other relevant partners. Colleges and universities in Oregon and elsewhere may have established similar planning processes as part of their plans for pandemic influenza, and this can be a resource.
- Develop information-sharing systems with partners to establish reporting on key facts such as absenteeism or changes to student health center traffic.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism of students, staff, and faculty, including reviewing attendance and sick leave policies, and more.
- Establish procedures for students, staff, and faculty who are sick on campus, to keep sick individuals separate from well individuals.
• Perform routine environmental cleaning.
• Create plans to communicate accurate and timely information to the campus community.
• Review CDC’s guidance for businesses and employers.

**What guidance is in place for colleges and universities in the event of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in their community?**

See the CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) for more detailed information on the steps below.

• The first step if this situation arises is to talk with local health officials.
• Determine with local health officials if, when, and for how long the college or university may need to suspend classes and postpone or cancel extracurricular or large events and activities.
• If the individual attended class or was active on campus prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case, work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure, following laws with regard to confidentiality.
• Ensure continuity of teaching, learning, and research.
• Ensure continuity of safe housing. Work in close collaboration with local health officials to make all decisions related to on-campus housing. See the full guidelines on dormitories and housing in the CDC interim guidance here.
• Residents identified with COVID-19 or identified as contacts of individuals with COVID-19 should not necessarily be sent to their permanent homes off-campus.
• Ensure continuity of meal programs. Consult with local health officials to determine strategies for modifying food service offerings to the campus community. See the full guidelines on food services in the CDC interim guidance here.
• Consider if and when to stop, scale back, or modify other support services on campus.
• Help counter stigma and promote resilience on campus.
• Speak out against negative behaviors, including negative statements on social media about groups of people.
• Develop plans to support students, staff, and faculty who may feel overwhelmed by COVID-19 and associated events on campus.

**How can colleges and universities learn from each other in Oregon as this situation evolves?**

State and institutional leaders in Oregon have established a system for information-sharing between those involved with planning and decisions related to the novel coronavirus at Oregon institutions. Individuals who have questions about their institution’s participation on this resource should contact their college or university leadership.